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SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 288.—Vol. X. FOR WEEK ENDING JULY 7, 1894. [Price One Penny.

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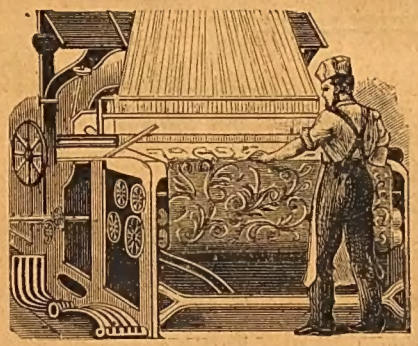

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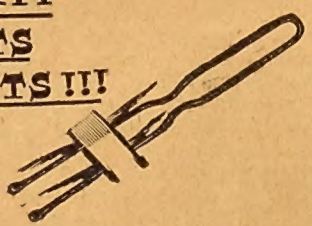

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No. 288.—Vol. X. *FOR THE WEEK ENDING JULY 7, 1894.* [PRICE ONE PENNY.

The Second Life

CHAPTER I.

THE fiery rays of an almost tropical sun at noon slanted through the open windows of Rose Cottage, where Leon Renaud stood by the bedside of his deceased wife. His little girl Louise, a child of five years, stood at his side; but, for all that, he was alone—alone, though a troop of men and angels had surrounded him; for what can disturb the desert solitude which death flings about itself as a broad mantle and above all who enter its presence.

The very fulness of life on that summer day, hints of which were borne through the windows with the stately sighing of the wind and the fragrance of the flowers, intensified and heightened, by contrast, the rigour and abysmal silence of that slumber upon which Renaud gazed.

That terrible scourge of 18— had visited Worcester with the utmost severity. Rose Cottage was situated in one of the least crowded districts of the city; yet this neighbourhood had not escaped the fate of the others.

Renaud's young wife had devoted herself day by day to visiting and nursing the sick around her, until she herself was stricken down with the disease, of which she soon became a victim.

Fate had in its quiver no dart so poignant as this which suddenly pierced the heart of the fond husband. Leon Renaud was of French lineage on his father's side.

His father, Charles Renaud, had resided in Worcester for a short time, years ago, and had there married Leon's mother, but immediately after this event had returned to his home in Paris.

While Leon was a mere boy his mother died. Then Leon's father married again. This second wife, stepmother to the motherless boy, proved a curse to Charles Renaud's declining years. To escape her tyranny, young Renaud fled from Paris to Rome, where he devoted himself to studying art. Dreamer and poet he had always been. His temperament, inherited from his mother, induced to contemplation; his large lustrous hazel eyes betokened at once the passionate eagerness of inquiry and a disposition towards mysticism.

His keen analysis drove him from all the ordinary positions quietly assumed by the mass of men as to the great questions affecting human life and destiny; but, as if finding no rest beyond these landmarks, his soul seemed to wander ever in the shadowy borderland where the real blends so readily with the ideal and the visible receives the mantle of the invisible.

After a residence of some years in Italy, he was seized with an irresistible desire to visit his mother's native city. He came to England, and there, encouraged by the patronage of a few who had known his father, he easily contrived to satisfy his material wants, which were few and simple.

Here he met Marion Day. At this time he was over thirty, while she was only eighteen. She was a simple country girl who would certainly have attracted attention by her beauty; and her parents were plain people with moderate means. Her education had been of the simplest sort, and she had none of that distinguishing style which often in the world's estimate supplies the want of both wealth and beauty.

But Leon Renaud judged not after the manner of the world. He had lived for the most part a solitary life. He was now in the prime of manhood, but the dreams of his youth still lingered with him, though his youthful enthusiasm had been tempered by a ripened judgment.

Leon and Marion seemed to be spiritual counterparts, and there was a rare completeness, therefore, in their marriage. He was noble, and inspired in her a sense of grandeur. His wonderful subtlety of thought, his wealth of emotion, and the spirituality of his nature introduced her into a new world, where he was always her teacher.

Their chief delight was in music, which became to them a sort of universal language. His very conversation seemed to echo to grand old melodies, and as she listened it seemed as if the winds wafted fragrance and repose to her.

If her spirit soared to meet his, so that her love was almost adoration, it was also true that his grand sympathies found through her humble, womanly charity, a way to their expression in the beaten paths of life. This beautiful life they had lived together for years, and now the end had come.

Leon was startled, bewildered, stunned. It was as if the repose of heaven had been broken. The dearness of this woman, and his need of her, had never before been so sensibly felt. He stood upon the brink of an abyss which his thoughts—subtle and deep as they were—could not compass nor fathom.

His soul was moved to its depths. To such men the tragedy of such infinite loss is not simply solemn; it is a great agitator.

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It is not strange, therefore, that to Renaud in the presence of this mighty sorrow, the great problem of human destiny—as it seemed to him—namely, the question of a future life presented itself anew.

But eager as were the questionings of his soul, he seemed confronted by a sphinx that answered only in riddles. The suggestions of his own intellect seemed almost cruel, intruding as they did into the sacred presence chamber of his tenderest emotions.

"Is this the end?" he asked. "In the midst of life has my Marion drooped as do the flowers, to fall away into a mere heap of dust? Even the crazy old alchemists had a fancy that, by some magical process they could restore from the rose at least its phantom—a semblance of the real flower!

"Is not the Divine chemistry as potent as that? It cannot be that my rose is lost to me for ever!"

He reviewed in thought that movement of the glorious oratorio of the "Messiah" as it swept over his soul—so susceptible to the impressions of music—but still he was not satisfied.

The calm surface of his thoughts had been disturbed by the heavy hand of Death, and the waves still undulated in ever widening circles toward an uncertain shore.

CHAPTER II.

The dead in this time of peril were hurriedly buried. As the sun of the following day sank into the heavens, the face of Marion, after receiving the last fond kisses of the husband and daughter, was hidden from their view, and they followed the remains to its last resting-place.

Two men met the sombre cortège as it returned from the burying-ground whose characters must be described. They were not together, but met the procession at different stages of its course.

One of these was Dr. Eugene Marchand, who had just issued from the library in his house in Dauphin Street. Both by his dress and his walk it could be seen that he was a fastidious gentleman of easy manners and perfect self-possession. He was a passionate lover of the beautiful, and shrank from ugliness and deformity with almost a shudder. Yet this man, to whom disease was disgusting, made it the great study of his life.

Here he met Marion Day.

This lover of the beautiful spent no small portion of his time in anatomical dissections. The sight of pain was a torment to him; but he was so skilled in its alleviation that he was the most promising surgeon in the town.

As he met the procession, and could see through the windows of the leading carriage the sorrow-stricken faces of Renaud and his little girl, his heart was touched, and he said to himself:

"Alas, how sad!" and the frequency of such spectacles in those death-crowded days did not diminish the profoundness of his sympathy. Looking into his naturally cheerful but now somewhat pensive face, and into the clear, grey eyes that almost changed their colour under the influence of emotion, you would have said: "This man is a child of nature—open, as men rarely are, to all material influences, able or subtle. His smile answers to the faintest gleam of sunshine, and his heart is swayed by cloud and storm, and although he is so much of a philosopher, his philosophy affords no shield to cover, no mark to disguise, his susceptibility.

The other man to whom we alluded was Ernest Drivet. As he met the procession he also looked upon the faces of the chief mourners, and knew that Marion Renaud had been buried. He gazed with stolid indifference upon the insignia of their great sorrow.

He had once been a lover of Marion—if anything could be dignified by the name of love which was cherished in Drivet's heart; it was certainly the purest and worthiest emotion that had ever entered there. But she, with that unerring intuition which belongs to such pure spiritual natures, had avoided him from the first, until at length his passionate love had been turned into bitter hate.

Drivet was a thoroughly selfish man. He was endowed with a very fair exterior, with a strong intellect, and with consummate impudence; he loved intrigue, and delighted in playing upon other men as upon the strings of an instrument.

He had acted upon the stage, had written stray articles for the press, and was now a sort of attaché to the new hospital, which he had entered some years before, and where he still lingered, not as a student, but upon good terms with all.

He had been sauntering along the street, but as the procession passed him his steps were arrested as by some suddenly considered purpose.

"Ah!" he chuckled to himself, "a capital idea! Bold—but why not?"

Reaching the end of the street, his attention was directed toward a group of labourers lounging outside a public-house. A conversation followed in low tones between Drivet and two or three of this group whom he had drawn to one side.

Some bargain was completed, apparently, for as Drivet left them he slipped some silver pieces into their hands. When we left Dr. Marchand he was on his way to a remote and solitary cottage in the outskirts of the town occupied by a young medical student whose name was Frank, and who was a *protégé* of the doctor's.

This youth ushered the doctor into a room where three or four students were evidently awaiting him. This was the "Marchand Society," which pursued investigations on its own account.

The doctor was to lecture to this select company this evening on the structure of the human brain, and Ernest Drivet had been engaged to provide a suitable "subject" for additional investigations in the apartment adjoining the parlour, and which was known as the "Subject Room."

He had provided the necessary object in this way on previous occasions. Dr. Marchand entered upon his preliminary lecture, which was interesting and decidedly original. An hour passed. It was eleven o'clock and no advices had been received from Drivet.

But the topic of the evening was one of absorbing interest, and the doctor resumed his lecture. His mind was abundantly stored with narratives of peculiar psychological experiences illustrating his theories.

After midnight a knock at the outside door was recognised

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as Drivet's. The long expected "something" was hurriedly transferred to the dissecting room, where the mysterious bundle was opened by Frank and Drivet. Two dark blue eyes slowly opened which should have been for ever closed, and Ernest Drivet was confronted by a living face that should have belonged to the dead.

He gave one look of astonishment and terror, and then without one word, fled from the house as if pursued by a phantom. The other students were abruptly dismissed without knowing the details, and Frank, with Dr. Marchand, were left alone with their strange and unaccountably proceeding subject.

CHAPTER III.

A transformation had been wrought—a miracle. It was not simply the awakening, as from a sleep, of one who seemed dead, and who had been laid away for an everlasting slumber—it was a new life.

The eyes so familiar to Ernest Drivet had not recognised him. The world upon which they opened seemed as new as it does to a fresh-born child. The past to this awakened sleeper was literally a blank. This woman was mentally an infant.

The words which fell upon her ears seemed meaningless, and she could utter none in reply.

She was taken away in a carriage, which Frank had provided, to Dr. Marchand's home, where she was placed in the care of his wife. In all mental affairs—in all respects, indeed, except as to her age, she was a child; though she learned more rapidly than a mere child.

Dr. Marchand's mansion was well suited to his character. It was costly and beautiful, was furnished with all the elegance that the most refined and artistic taste could suggest or wealth make possible, and was surrounded by beautiful grounds. It was in this bright home of luxury and art that his "patient" began her new life. The doctor at first regarded her with simply a speculative interest.

She was a case inviting deep study—and he studied it. Very soon, however, science yielded to sentiment; for this woman in her life was very attractive. She was as different from her former self as the butterfly is from the chrysalis. As Marion Day, or Marion Renaud, she had been a simple, earnest, spiritual being, self-sacrificing, and the very impersonation of charity.

The brain is the flower of the body, and it seemed that out of the dust of the flower which had matured and decayed a new and different flower had blossomed. Serious she had been; now she was gay. Deep-natured previously, now the movements of her thoughts were light and airy. Perhaps the change could not be more happily expressed than by likening it to the transformations which have affected whole races, bearing them from the rude Pelasgian life into their Hellenic or artist era.

Only these were gradual changes as compared with that sudden and almost miraculous transformation which had here been effected.

It is not wonderful that Dr. Marchand found in this woman so much to study, nor that his studies grew to have an additional interest from the beginning of love for her in his heart, the love of a father for a child. But whenever he thought of the past he was sorely puzzled. He did not even know her name.

There was no clue to the mystery, for she remembered absolutely nothing. It is true, however—and this should be mentioned here for the benefit of those interested in the purely psychological features of her case—it is true that when she happened to be in places that should have been familiar there did come to her inner sense a vague shadow of reminiscence—something that could scarcely be called an impression, it was so faint and indistinct.

Especially was she haunted by the vision of reminiscence when she went into the cemetery—it was there that the Dupuys had all been buried—which she quite frequently visited during the summer that followed her strange resurrection. This puzzled her and caused her to linger about the place, as one who was in some way connected with the inexplicable wonder of her life. But the idea was as faint and shadowy as the fragrance of the flowers that decorated the tombs about her.

Dr. Marchand had never told her of even the single fact of which he was cognisant. He intimated that she had been ill and had been placed in his charge in so accidental a manner that he even did not and could not learn her name. With this she was forced to be content. She knew that the doctor loved her, and she was perfectly happy in loving him and his beautiful wife. But he was troubled by a horrible doubt. He was afraid some possible interruption of this new life—either through her return to her former mental state or through some intrusive claim from others who had known her and who might discover her present retreat. He therefore guarded her most jealously and felt anxious when she was out of his sight. After all, his great fear was Ernest Drivet, who must be able, he thought, to bridge over the hiatus between the two lives of this woman.

"Ah, a capital idea!"

CHAPTER IV.

Leon Renaud since the death of his wife had become a recluse. A year had passed, and still the sharpness of his grief had not been diminished. In this wandering life which he was leading, his eyes became hollow, his skin sallow, and his health rapidly failed.

Convinced that his present sufferings were redoubled by the remembrance of the past pleasures and that the passions gather renewed strength in solitude, he resolved to remove from the place which recalled the remembrance of his great loss. He had kept continually in action, walking in sunshine and rain, at night or day, wandering into the depths of the woods, over cultivated land and grassy fields, hoping to divert his mind by the fatigue of his body, and to change the course of his reflections by his seeming ignorance of the places where he was—but the soul of the lover finds everywhere traces of the beloved object; night and day, the calm of solitude, the noise of crowds, time even, which effaces so many other memories, has no power to remove these, for, like the needle once touched by the magnet, which, however it may be disturbed, turns so soon as it is still to the pole that attracts it.

Undoubtedly, love does delight in many bitter pleasures, and he consoled himself in his misfortune with thoughts of—"I have not deserved it, yet she has met the fate allotted to us all—to high birth and lowly, to beauty and to those less favoured. The life of woman and of man, with all its projects, is like building a tower whose crown is death—and in being born we are condemned to die. Death is a benefit to us all; it is the night of the restless day we call life; it is the sleep wherein the diseases, grief, vexations, and fears repose that molest without cessation the unfortunate living."

The old desire to wander had returned to him, and he contemplated an early departure for the Continent. With this in view, and the remembrance of a very vivid, peculiar, and startling dream wherein Marion still existed fresh in his mind, he went, towards the close of a summer afternoon, to visit the cemetery for the last time.

Through the avenues of tombstones Renaud walked until he reached the family vault. As he gazed, he seemed to be transported back to that summer noon one year ago, when the shock of death first fell upon his heart. His soul was not agitated as it had been then. At first the marble repose of the place, though in some sort a symbol of death, soothed

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and invited him. Then the suggestions of life that were thrown out even here seemed to answer his old doubts and to give him hope.

The climbing roses and the trailing ivy towered above the stony silence, as if hinting of ever-flowing change—as if whispering to his heart: "There is no place of rest! For see! out of the very dust life rises tremblingly but triumphantly over the mask of Death."

He remembered how this same idea of life and motion, as contrasted with the death-like stillness, had once occurred to him in reading that passage in the twelfth Odyssey, where Homer describes the cave of the Naiads. It all came back to him now—the picture of the Naiads weaving for ever at long stone looms, and of the wild bees humming and honeymaking round cups and casks of stone, where evermore the waves entered and broke upon the stony flooring.

The fading sunlight flashed across the name of the dear departed, and Renaud still gazed intently, as if there was something still to come for which he waited. Might not the veil of separation be lifted but for a moment?—and, as if in answer to his thought, there in the clear light, almost at his side, stood the living form of Marion! There she stood with one finger raised to her forehead as if she were trying to solve some laborious problem—stood thus for one moment, and then fled as from some haunted chamber. As for Renaud, astonished at his heavenly vision, as it seemed to him, and overwhelmed with the ecstasy of that glorious moment, he sank to his knees and buried his face in his hands. When he left the cemetery a few minutes later his face beamed with a smile of assured hope. The next day he started for the continent, and on the evening of his departure, Dr. Marchand gave his own name to the nameless woman who had come so strangely in his way. She became his adopted daughter. As a physiological mystery she was worth a fortune to him.

There she stood with one finger raised to her forehead.

CHAPTER V.

Dr. Marchand had rightly conjectured that Ernest Drivet knew Marion's past history. But he had not met Drivet since that memorable night at Frank's, though he had sought him diligently. Yet the object of his search had all the while been hovering closely about and had kept himself well informed as to the movements of the doctor and his patient.

It was only now that his time had come—now, when the developments over which he had kept watch had been fully matured and the doctor had openly adopted the girl. Drivet's original scheme, conceived on the evening when he had employed the labourers to assist him in carrying out his design, had contemplated nothing beyond the satisfaction of his malice toward Renaud and his wife.

He was startled—actually confounded at first—by the result of his night's work; and after his astonishment had somewhat subsided he was led by curiosity to see what would follow. We can readily imagine his surprise at the ensuing events, and especially at the doctor's extraordinary step. Why had not Marion fled? Had she ceased to love her husband Renaud, the broken-hearted? As a spy watching from a distance, he could not answer these questions.

A few weeks afterwards Drivet appeared at the doctor's house. To his astonishment—was there no end to mysteries?—she did not recognise him. Marion seemed to him more beautiful and fascinating than ever in the past years. She was the same, and yet not the same. Her dress, her manner, her whole expression had changed.

It was the old flower with a new and different fragrance. While he stood entranced with wonder he was aroused by a touch of the doctor's hand upon his shoulder, followed by the request for a private conversation in the library. He readily acceded, and a few words from the doctor explained the situation.

"You know, Drivet," said the doctor anxiously, "you know who the girl was?"

"Yes, I know some things, not much; but the disclosure of that little affair is a serious matter for me."

"It may be serious for me, too," said the doctor, "and meagre as your information may be, it is invaluable to me. I would give a hundred pounds to know all about her."

"Oh, it's not so very bad, doctor," returned Drivet. "You see, she had been an inmate of an insane asylum for a number of years, took the fever, died apparently, and was buried—you know the rest."

This invention of Drivet's lulled the doctor's fears, and his gratitude for relief made him generous, so much so that, while the brief interview had satisfied Drivet's cupidity, as well as his curiosity, he left the house with a large sum in his pocket—one that would go a great way, spendthrift though he was. But he could not keep away from the greater prize.

If the doctor could win Marion's love, why need he despair? Had he not rescued her from the grave? Did she not belong to him? Then he remembered she had not shown toward him any of that repugnance which she had formerly exhibited.

In a short time they would even become friends, and the doctor was compelled to suffer this to proceed, for fear of offending one whom in his heart he despised. Evidently, whatever Marion had gained in her new life, she had lost those spiritual intuitions which had guided and guarded her in her previous existence.

As Drivet's power over Marion increased so also did his hold upon her adopted father. He professed to be making a more careful investigation as to Marion's antecedents, and little by little the truth came out that she had been Leon Renaud's wife. At first the doctor was not inclined to believe it; but one day Drivet took him to the cemetery and showed

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She found him, quite by accident, in his studio.

him the empty tomb. That was done to obtain more money, but this time the attempt was in vain.

The doctor, amazed and bewildered, hurried home, and for hours he paced the floor of his library in a frenzy of agony. He had not the least idea what he ought to do or even if her husband was alive. At last he went out into the open air. The sound of voices in the summer-house, as he strolled down the garden, attracted his attention. As he approached, unseen, he recognised the voices. They were Drivet's and Marion's. He listened. It was evidently a leave-taking. Were these two lovers? He peered through the thick vine-clusters and saw Drivet standing by the side of Marion with his arm about her waist, and heard him ask, as he looked pleadingly down upon her innocent, upturned face:

"Shall it be to-morrow, dearest?" was the question he put.

In a moment Dr. Marchand stood within the arbour. Before those cool, searching grey eyes Drivet winced, released his hold upon Marion's waist, and slunk away without one word. And she—she simply cast upon the recreant one look of scorn and infinite loathing. The serpent that just one moment ago had seemed so bold and beautiful with its shining crest, had resumed its natural habit and was revealed as a crawling thing. Apollo had turned coward and she hated him.

Turning to the doctor she fell powerless within his arms. She had been simply as a child in all this, free and guiltless. This second life which she had lived before the doctor and his wife, who had watched her as if she had been her own daughter, was as pure and holy as that of childhood, but also undisciplined, for it was a life in which all that was beautiful and strong called forth a frank and fearless response, but in which experience had furnished no principles for guidance and no test against disguised villainy.

His own influence over her and all the circumstances with which he had surrounded her had tended to the development of such a life and with just that one woeful deficiency. While he thought thus she lay prostrate and nerveless in his arms. Gradually she began to realise her father's presence; then her apathy gave way to convulsive sobbings.

"Oh, take me away, take me anywhere; I can't stay here!" she cried.

"Yes, darling, I'll take you away," he said kindly. "Do not be troubled; it was only a dream and it is all over now." And he carried her to her own room, where he left her in care of his wife.

Yes, he must go away—away from Drivet, away from that cenotaph in the cemetery, the tablet of which was photographed upon his memory for ever. In a few days Dr. Marchand had let his house, and, with his wife and the poor widowed girl, he embarked for the Cape. Two evenings later, as he was sitting near the rail on the upper deck, enjoying his cigar and congratulating himself upon his happy escape from the troubles which had lately beset him, he looked round, and at his side stood Ernest Drivet.

Foiled in his last hope, the doctor seized his *protégée's* tormentor round the waist and tried to throw him overboard. A struggle followed, which resulted fatally for both of the combatants. They went overboard, each grappling the other in a death-struggle.

A deafening shriek was heard from Marion's cabin, from the window of which she had witnessed the fatal termination of the conflict. She was found upon the floor of her room, apparently lifeless. Every effort was made to recover Drivet and Marchand, but in vain—both had evidently been drowned. For hours the girl remained in this trance-like swoon. When she awoke she did not recognise the doctor's wife. She did not understand where she was, but murmured: "Leon, oh, Leon, where are you?" She was now Marion Renaud again, and in her thoughts was back in Rose Cottage.

"I've been ill," she murmured. "Who are you, and where is Leon?" Gradually the woman who had been a mother to her communicated to her the events of the past two years, but Marion comprehended not one word. There was some dreadful mistake; she knew nothing of Dr. Marchand, or indeed of anything that was told her. Only yesterday, it seemed to her, she was nursing the poor sick people under the shadow of Worcester Cathedral.

It was long before she could be made to believe in a life of which consciousness gave no testimony.

. . . . . .

We need not follow in detail the search for her husband, which was continued during several years. She went to Paris, to Rome, and almost over the entire continent, to the East, and at last, when she had quite given up in despair, she one day found him, quite by accident, in his studio in Worcester.

Renaud dropped his pipe and brushes and rose to his feet, and there before him stood his long lost Marion. He had no time for astonishment, for her arms were in a moment clinging about his neck, while they laughed and cried all in one breath.

. . . . . .

Leon Renaud is still alive, and in spare moments from his paintings is preparing a grand philosophical treatise on the "Human Mind," and its power of retention, in which, as may be easily imagined, he considers that element of human life to have been very much overestimated in its importance, and at least in its connection with the more intricate and greater features of an existence.

THE MAN WHO CAUGHT A TARTAR.

IT is not often that I find myself within the precincts of a police court, but a short time ago, happening to be seized with a sudden and unaccountable curiosity, I wended my way toward one of those interesting buildings, and effected an entrance.

I say effected, because it was a matter of no little difficulty, the outer chamber being crammed to inconvenience with forty or fifty individuals, mostly women, two-thirds of whom seemed in the last stages of despondency, while the remainder afforded contrast by exhibiting a sort of unhealthy cheerfulness.

The police inspector on duty that day was an old acquaintance of mine, and upon noticing me, he immediately beckoned me into his office.

"There's a peculiar case just decided," he said; "one you might like to know something about. The fellow is discharged and will be coming out in a minute. Why, there he goes!" ejaculated the inspector, "that man in the corduroys."

The "man in the corduroys" had only just got into the street when I overtook him.

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He was standing still, looking up and down the thoroughfare, apparently undecided what to do, all the time feeling in his trousers' pockets as though he had lost something. I divined his thoughts, and, accosting him quietly, said: "After the unpleasant proceedings just concluded, possibly a little light refreshment might be acceptable."

"Just what I was a-thinking, sir," he replied, smiling; "an' I was just a-feelin' to see if I'd got the price of a pint anywheres, but I find I'm quite broke."

"Never mind," I observed, and in less than a couple of minutes I had him comfortably seated behind a foaming tankard and a long pipe in an adjacent public-house.

He was a fine specimen of the British working man, tall and broad-shouldered, with a frank, open face—not at all one who could be judged as belonging to the criminal classes.

I was anxious to know what crime he could have been charged with, and I mildly inquired if it had been a matter of "assault and battery."

"No, sir," he said, "but it will be next time—that is, if I lay hold o' the chap that made a fool of me."

"Is it a long story?" I queried.

"Not very. Would you like to hear it, sir?"

I assented eagerly.

"Well, then," he began, taking a few preliminary pulls at his pipe and one drink at the tankard, "yer see I've been out o' work now for nigh two months, scarcely knowing which way to turn for a meal, and glad to pick up a sixpence when and where I can.

"Well, one mornin' I went out as usual—that would be just nine days ago—and found myself with only tuppence ha'penny over the West-end way, near Holland Park.

"No job was to be had that mornin', so, feeling rather down at heart, and desperately hungry, I turned into a little pub' for a bit o' bread and cheese and a drop o' beer.

"I hadn't been sittin' there long afore a short, stumpy gent, with no end o' watch-chain in front of him, comes sauntering in, and seats himself plump alongside o' me.

"I ought to 'ave felt flattered, no doubt, and perhaps I did a little bit, when he said presently, in a very pleasant way, 'Nice morning.'

"'Yes,' I said, 'it is for those in work, but the morning doesn't seem partikler nice to me.'

"'You're out o' work, eh?' he asked. 'Well, I might have guessed as much by your crestfallen expression. What would you say if I put a little job in your way?'

"'I should say God bless yer, and mean it,' I answered, pricking up my ears and looking full in the little gent's face.

"He looked at me, too, very hard, I thought, as if he were trying to read what was inside o' me and couldn't quite manage it.

"'I can trust you?' he asked.

"'Perfectly,' I said.

"'Now, look here,' he says, speaking quite confidential like, and in a very low voice, 'I'm a detective. To-night I'm going to have a good try to nab a fellow who has been fooling the police for the last three months. I've got first-rate reliable information, and with your assistance I believe I shall have him.'

"'But'—I was going to tell him I knew nothing about thief-taking, and that I was afraid I should only spoil the affair, when he stopped me.

"'No buts,' he said; 'I know what I'm about. You will be new to him. He knows all the plain-clothes men in London, but he won't know you. There's a big reward. If we catch him I'll come down handsome. What'll you drink?'

"I drank his health, listened while he went on talking by the yard, and telling me what I should have to do.

"He told me that the man he intended to catch was going to commit a burglary at a house in Holland Park—who informed him he didn't say, but he said he knew it—and that he meant nabbing him in the very act. The house stood in small grounds, and my part of the performance was to watch for the burglar, and should he by any means give the detective the slip, to chase and collar him if I could.

"'But s'pose,' I said, as soon as I could get a word in, 's'pose a bobby comes along and catches sight o' me in those grounds at midnight?'

"'Well,' the little gent replied, laughing, 'you've only to give the police signal, three loud whistles, and tell them Inspector Dawker has engaged you.'

"I was rather doubtful even then, but the little gent's quick tongue soon smoothed it over, and I agreed to go in for a share of the reward.

"We left the tavern together and parted just outside, promising to meet at the house in Holland Park at twelve o'clock the same night.

"He cautioned me again not to breathe a word about the arrangement, and further mentioned that when he met me at night he would be disguised.

"Twelve o'clock came. I reached the meeting place to time, and found the detective waiting for me.

"He was dressed in clothes something like my own, and looked the flash gentleman no longer.

"He seemed rather impatient, and hastily pulled me through the gates of the garden and into a part of it where thick shrubs grew, making a capital hiding-place, from which you could look up and down the road quite plainly without being spotted yourself.

"'Now, mind,' he said quickly, 'if you see the burglar run, chase him; if a policeman comes, three loud whistles. I must be off, or I shall lose my chance. I shall be back in an hour. If I want assistance I will give you the three whistles.'

"With these parting words the man disappeared.

"I stood waiting there for quite half an hour, I should think, when I heard on the still night air the heavy tramp of a constable.

"He was coming my way, I fancied, and I was right.

"Slowly he drew nearer and nearer, until he stopped right abreast o' the very place where I was hiding, close to the garden gate.

"He put his hand and tried the gate fastening. It opened; he came inside, and flashed his lantern full on the very bush behind which I was standin'. Quick as possible, I let go three very loud, shrill whistles, but instead of the policeman being awed by the sound he dashed at me and caught me by the throat, in about half a minute nearly choking me, and stopping me from explaining why I was there.

"Finding I didn't resist, he loosened his hold and questioned me.

"I told him plump and plain that Inspector Dawker had engaged me—that I was doing my duty, and that he had better not spoil game.

"He only gripped my arm the tighter and laughed, telling me not to 'try it on with him,' and blew his whistle.

"In a few minutes another constable arrived, and between the two of 'em, what with their laughing and their questions, I had a lively time of it.

"This was another of that Dawker's schemes, they said, and I was put down as an accomplice trying on the 'innocent humbug' with 'em.

"It was in vain I declared my innocence of any scheme besides that for the capture of a notorious burglar.

"It was no go. I was taken to the nearest police station and charged on suspicion.

"The next morning, when brought before the magistrate, I learnt, to my great surprise, that the man I thought was a detective was none other than the burglar he pretended to be after, and that, instead of trying to catch a criminal, he was robbing the house whilst I kept watch outside, and warned him by my loud whistles of the arrival of the police.

"I was remanded for inquiries to be made, and, they being found satisfactory, I was brought up again this morning and discharged.

"But I hope the fellow keeps out o' my path, for I shall certainly be brought up for assault or manslaughter if ever I clap hands on him."

Having replenished my companion's tankard, I left him apparently quite comfortable.

But I heard him mutter as I turned away, "Wait till I meet him—I'll give him Dawker!"

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THE TOWN MARSHAL.

"THE most extraordinary man I met in America," said my uncle, "was a young fellow named Dee Anderson. He was a pitiable object, afflicted with disease, propped up in bed, gradually losing the bones of one leg, but never losing his spirits.

"A May morning with chattering squirrels and birds swelling their breasts with the impulses of praise was no brighter, no blither than he. In the winter, close housed, he cheerfully waited for spring, and when the first warm day came, he had his bed drawn near a window, and lying down there he would gaze far down into the orchard and revel in the beauties that nature spread out for him.

"I was a special favourite with him; and sometimes I used to take my revolver with me when I visited him, and lying, propped up at the window, he would shoot at something down in the orchard. Once he killed a hawk, and it did him so much good that I thought he would get well, but he didn't.

"Then I went back with my father to England, and for years I thought about that pale crippled boy, propped up at the window. I wrote to him, but he couldn't write, and I don't believe that any of his people could, either. Many years passed, and he gradually faded from my memory.

"Last time I went to the States I went down to Hackenville. I had lived near there when a boy. I was standing in a familiar street. Not a mark had been drawn to change the countenance of the old place. Not a fire had caused the putting up of a new building — moss-covered and venerable, it gave back to me my boyish fancy. I spoke to an old man. 'What ever became of Dee Anderson?' I asked.

"'Why, don't you know? Hah! I thought everybody knew.'

"'Dead, I suppose?'

"'What! Well, I reckon not. He's about the brightest man we've got. He's our town marshal.'

"'Oh, he got well, eh?'"

"'Well, mebby not from your standpoint. Yander he comes.'

"And there he did come, little, humped over, pale, walking on a stirrup and with a crutch.

"*Don't walk too fast, Jim.*"

"There was the town marshal, sure enough, and in a place, too, where men were wont to drink, and raise a row. How gladly he greeted me, and reached up and grasped my hand. I gave him a thoughtless grip and he writhed.

"'Come over and let's sit down and talk about old times,' said he. 'Do you recollect the time I killed the hawk? I knew then that there was a career mapped out for me—had been sorter low spirited that day, but when I pulled the trigger on that old rascal and tumbled him out of the tree, I knew that if ever I got out of that bed I would make a mark in the world; I didn't think, though, that I'd ever get to be marshal of this town. Don't walk fast; I can't keep up with you.'

"We went to the livery stable, sat down, and were talking when someone came up and said: 'Dee, Jim Blake is in town, and is raising trouble up on the square.'

"'That's so? Well, I must go down and see about him. Come with me.'

"I went along with him, and in his haste to reach the scene of disturbance, he stumbled and fell. I helped him up and brushed the dust off his coat. As we approached we saw a crowd on the square, and a man running past told us that Blake had shot at the sheriff.

"'Dee,' said I, 'you'd better not go. Here's a cart. Let me put you in it and send you out of town.'

"He looked at me reproachfully and said: 'I am the marshal of this place, and the marshal is expected to do his duty. Come on.'

"I had no wish to be shot at; I had no wish to meet Jim Blake, and I hung back. Dee hobbled on as fast as he could, and the crowd parted to let him pass. Jim Blake stood with a revolver in his hand. Dee approached him. And this is the talk that followed:

"'Hullo, Jim.'

"'Hullo, yourself.'

"'What are you plumbin' folk round here for, Jim?'

"'Oh, to keep 'em from plumbin' me.'

"'Well, but I'm the marshal of this town, and I don't want any plumbin' done here. It don't look right. Now, look here, Jim. You are a big, strong man, the gamest and the strongest man in this here neighbourhood, and nobody that's got any sense would try to take you by main force; but I believe you've got a good heart, Jim, and would do most anything to help an unfortunate fellow along.

"'Now, I am the marshal of this town, and they expect me to do my duty, and if I don't the City Council will fire me and mine. Don't you see how I'm fixed? Of course you do, because you are a sensible man, and a kind man, although you do shoot at folks once in a while. Jim, I'm going to ask you a favour, just to help me along, you know.

"'You just take my arm, now, and help me down to the jail as fast as you can. Don't you see, livin' depends on you right now? You know that I couldn't hurt you; why, I could scarcely hold a pistol, much less fire it. Take my arm, Jim.'

"He held out his arm, shrunken and withered. 'Take my arm, Jim.' And hang me if the fellow didn't take his arm and walk off towards the jail with him.

"'Don't walk too fast, Jim.'

"'Excuse me; I'm used to walkin' purty fast,' Jim replied, pulling up.

"I followed and caught them up just as they arrived at the jail, and I stood peeping in. 'I can't get this door unlocked,' said the marshal. 'Will you please unlock it, Jim?'

"Jim unlocked the door and stepped inside the cell, and then the marshal began again to fumble with the door. 'I can't lock it,' said he.

"'Let me lock it,' I called.

"Blake wheeled about, his eyes glaring with rage. 'Tech that door,' he said, 'and I'll kill you.'

"I didn't touch it.

"'Can't you git it locked?' Jim asked. 'Here, let me reach round and lock it for you.' And he thrust his hand through the bars of the iron-bound door, turned the key in the lock, and started to amuse himself by shooting at the flies on the wall.

"When I went back to the town an old man said to me: 'We haven't had very much trouble since Dee's been marshal, but before that we had a good deal. Four marshals have been killed here in the last six years, but Dee sorter appeals to a feller's pity and that is harder to git away with than a knife or a pistol.'"

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THE MADMAN

THE man began thus: "My name, Director, cannot be altogether unknown to you. I am Giuseppe Gabrini. Although still young—I am thirty-eight years old—my inventions have brought me, if I may venture to say so, a good deal of renown. Of course you have seen in the newspapers that an English syndicate has paid me £20,000 for my electric railway.

"These details simply serve to show you that I am not an ordinary man, and will, at the same time, make you understand the extent of the misfortune which has befallen me."

A pause, then he continued: "About seven years ago I married Clara Renandi, a charming girl of very good family. At that time I was a young engineer, unknown to fame, working hard, but earning little. There were moments when it was difficult to get on, but my wife encouraged and helped me in the struggle for existence.

"Thus two years went by. Then I succeeded in making the company for which I was working accept an invention of mine, a machine for extracting fossilised carbon by a new system. I was paid a very decent price for it.

"From that moment my means were almost comfortable, and I was able, therefore, to dedicate myself entirely to the study and development of my electric railway, which I had already been at work upon. From that instant I ought to have been perfectly happy, and, indeed, I thought that I was . . . . Alas! Fate had decreed otherwise.

"One day—take note of this, Director—one day, I, who for lack of time read so little, chanced to cast my eyes over the account of a most frightful deed. It was the story of a man—a labourer—who was suddenly seized with a mania for infanticide, and while under the influence of this horrible idea killed his three children. At first I was astonished, and really doubted the truth of the tale.

"But little by little it seemed to me less strange, and I began to look into the question, even reading books of specialists on the subject. For hours at a time my mind would dwell on the matter, and in spite of myself I found my brain perturbed by the mysterious problems of will, power, and desire.

"Two days later, while dining with my wife, and still absorbed in meditation, I began to handle my knife rather feverishly, thinking, as I did so, that it was with a weapon similar to this that the workman had murdered his children . . . . . I made a violent gesture . . . . . A sharp cry recalled me to myself. Clara showed me a long red scratch on her hand.

"'Are you crazy?' she exclaimed. 'See what you have done?'"

"I did not reply, but with increasing agitation looked at the hand which she held out, and at the drops of blood rising on the white skin. Oh, the fierce joy I felt when I saw that blood! . . . . . I was suddenly assailed by a wild desire to see more of it: to see it flowing in a stream . . . . . Oh, to hold a woman tight in one's grasp, push her down trembling and frightened, and while she weeps and cries for mercy, while she sobs and screams by turn, to drive a knife slowly into her bosom. Yes, that was what I wanted to do now. Kill a woman ——my wife!——This horrible idea took posession of me, wrote itself on my brain in letters of fire. Then began a terrible, almost savage battle within me, a struggle without cessation.

"I forced myself to care more and more for my adored Clara, but in vain. Finally—finally—how can I say it? This life has been going on for two months. Until to-day I had been able to control myself. But this morning the temptation was stronger than ever, and I decided to put an end to it once for all, so, with knife in hand, I entered my wife's room. She had just left it. Then, like a madman, I started to run, and came here to beg you to protect me from myself; to shut me up; put me in a strait-jacket even, if necessary; anything, oh, anything, to prevent my committing a crime."

The superintendent of the asylum, who had grown a trifle pale during the recital, touched the bell at his side, and, as an attendant appeared, said:

"It shall be as you desire, sir."

. . . . .

Very blonde, with sapphire blue eyes, and that delicate doll-like beauty so attractive in some women, she lay back in a chair, in an attitude of absolute repose, musing. As the silvery tones of the clock chimed the hour—three o'clock—Signora Gabrini turned her head slowly. She sighed, and her eyes sparkled.

Only a few minutes to wait now, and somebody she wanted very much to see would arrive—her last admirer. She had had many, but, in the various flirtations she carried on from time to time, no man had every attracted her as did this one; no, not even at that period—before he became insane, and was confined in a madhouse—when, her husband too much

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absorbed in scientific researches to pay much attention to her, she had sought diversion in this pastime—had she cared for any of the knights who danced attendance on her.

True, in those days her ardour might have been quelled a little by the fear, always, of rousing the latent jealousies in her husband's nature. It was not easy to judge what observations the engineer might be making outside his work, apparently so absorbing.

Unconscious how deep her liking was for this latest flame, and how dangerous it might become in view of her present lonely state, she found herself actually counting the minutes until he should be there.

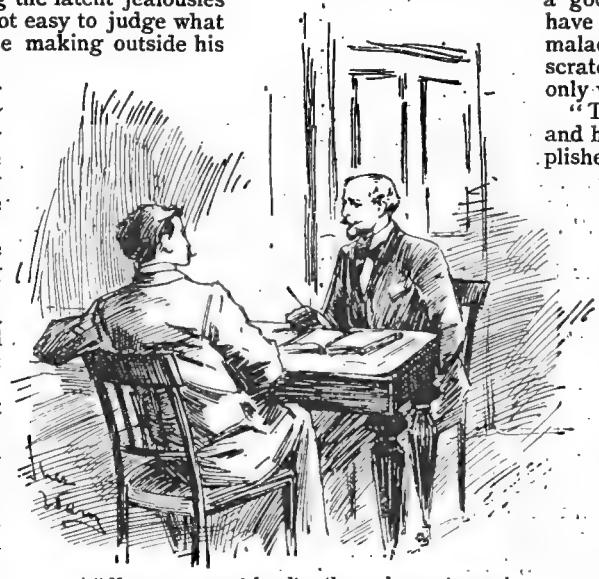
Suddenly she trembled—she heard footsteps in the adjoining room. At last! 'Twas he——

The door opened, and Signora Gabrini sprang to her feet, livid with terror. She gave a scream: "The madman!"

But Gabrini, very calm, almost smiling, said:

"You did not expect me, did you, madam? Pray calm yourself, however, I am no longer mad."

He drew a long breath, and then went on: "We have a great deal to say to each other—so, be seated. No one can disturb us. I have locked the door."



"My name cannot be altogether unknown to you."

Appalled, knowing herself to be perfectly helpless, however, she obeyed. He continued:

"I shall be brief. You know what difficulties I had to contend with at the beginning; what hand to hand struggles I had with poverty, and what an immense amount of work I had to accomplish before I succeeded in rising out of the obscurity in which I was vegetating.

"Notwithstanding the absorbing nature of my occupations and studies, I managed to steal as much time as possible from them to devote to you, I am convinced that I did my duty in this regard. But were you appreciative of my efforts, grateful for the attentions? No. Within two years after our marriage, not finding my devotion sufficient, you were encouraging admiration from another source, were carrying on a flirtation——"

She protested with a gesture, but he simply went on:

"Oh, it is useless for you to deny anything. I can prove the truth of my assertions. I have found letters, by chance, of course, and——any way, it is not necessary to go into details; suffice it to say, that I know exactly what your course has been. Harmless flirtations? Oh, no!

"You are naturally surprised that, knowing all this, I have maintained such an impassible demeanour, have kept silence so long. But what could I do? I did not wish my name, already growing famous, to become a byword for the public to scoff at, as must assuredly have been the case if my conjugal troubles were noised abroad, much less did I propose to furnish gossip for the newspapers.

"And again, I really hoped that you might stop all this nonsense——you see what a fool I was! I was ready to forgive you, to take you back to my heart at the first word of regret. I wanted to believe in you; but 'twas no use. You were frivolous to the core. Well, I had not strength of mind enough to rise above this daily torment—to shut my eyes to your continuous flirtations, carried on in my very presence. So I decided to put an end to the situation once for all, and it seemed to me that there was but one way to accomplish this, and that, to kill you."

Clara started from her chair with a cry of terror, but, seizing her by the wrists, he forced her back to her seat, and, his voice dry and hard, he added: "Kill you! Yes, this is the idea which has been formulating itself in my mind for a long time; but I wished to kill you without compromising myself in any way. I began by feigning insanity. Oh, I concocted some kind of a story, and they shut me up in the asylum, you know. Then, of course, I had to do a good deal of acting—pretending to have sudden and violent attacks of my malady, throwing myself on my keepers, scratching and biting them; but I was only waiting my chance to escape them.

"The occasion came about to-day, and here I am. My vengeance accomplished, I shall return to the madhouse. Doubtless I shall be tried for murder; but I shall be acquitted, and they will take me back to the asylum. I shall be kept there a year, perhaps five; then, when they see how docile, quiet, and calm I am, they will declare me cured, and I shall regain my liberty.

"Then, with no further obstacles in my way, no chains to bind or oppress me, and a tranquil spirit, I shall once more consecrate myself to study, to science."

He ceased. Clara, her breath laboured, her eyes staring at him in helpless terror, lay back in the chair, powerless to move. Finally, as he rose, tears began to flow from her eyes and down her pallid cheeks. Sobbing, she threw herself at his feet, imploring him, as she dragged herself along on her knees, to have pity on her.

* * * * *

Giuseppe Gabrini was not prosecuted. He was declared irresponsible and shut up again in the asylum until cured. Dr. Leonardo Carbonelli, an eminent doctor, asked to have charge of his case.

His request was granted. The results obtained were simply stupendous. Gabrini, irritable and raging, suddenly became quiet and docile. He recovered his reason. When they spoke to him of his wife, whom he had killed, he wept bitterly. Two months later he was completely cured, and they hastened to give him back his freedom.

She threw herself at his feet.

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A USEFUL OPPONENT.

I HEARD the street door bang, I heard someone coming up the stairs and I sprang to my feet listening. They were the steps of a man deep in thought or suffering pain. Had my presentiment come true? Ah! Those terrible presentiments which made my life a misery to me.

The door opened and Horace stood before me. I noticed his face was flushed and his brows were slightly bent in a visible effort to concentrate his thoughts. Otherwise he was the same as ever. Calm, deliberate, with the brightest of smiles and the cheeriest of greetings on his lips.

"How scared you look, little one," he said as he kissed me fondly and then crossed over to where the spirit case stood, by the side of the ice in the silver bowl, and the seltzer syphons.

I nodded.

He finished the brandy and soda at a draught, and busied himself compounding another.

"Frightened! What at?"

I went a step nearer, and lifted my eyes appealingly to him.

"It's always the same when you are away," I said, swallowing a sob. "Oh, Horace the risk is too great."

"Risk be hanged," he said carelessly; "there is no danger, little one, I promise you."

"There is danger," I persisted; "any night you might get murdered in the streets, or if luck should turn——"

"I shall take good care that it doesn't," he said quickly. "You don't think——"

He bit his lip, and I was half frightened at the change in him. "Don't think what?"

He laughed with an evident effort, and took a cigarette from his case.

"Why do you always look at the blackest side of things?" he said with a smile, ignoring the sentence he had left half unfinished.

"I try not to," I said gallantly, "but I would give anything if you would promise never to go to that wretched club again."

We were standing side by side on the hearth now. He did not answer at once. I took a bunch of fragrant violets from his button hole and arranged them in water.

"I would give up gambling to-morrow," he said half to himself, "only—only, don't you see, I can't."

I did not follow the unexpressed thoughts which clinched that argument, and I told him so.

"Women never can understand," he said petulantly.

"Men never know when they are well off," I retorted, stooping down to throw a log on the fire which made the smouldering embers leap into a sudden flame. "Surely you are rich enough now to——"

"Please you," he interrupted with a little laugh.

"And yourself too, most scornful one."

He shrugged his shoulders.

"I suppose I shall have to explain it all to you," he said, "and then you won't understand."

He pulled up an arm-chair to the fire, and I leaned over the back listening.

"You know as well as I do," he said, "that when I married you I had no visible means of support, although your people were labouring under the most delightful delusion that I was a millionaire and a catch in the matrimonial market worth more than passing attention. Therefore, when it came to setting up a house I had to make some money, which was something I had never taken the trouble to do before for fear of offending my tradesmen. They don't like it, you know, in these days, if you seem in a hurry to pay them. And money I made by playing cards, which is easy enough when you know——"

The peculiar expression which I had noticed once before that night flitted across his face and settled there.

"'When you know how,' I suppose you were going to say," I remarked, wondering why for a second time a sentence should have been begun only to be left unfinished.

"Yes," he answered, "in all games which combine chance with skill, the skill is bound to tell in the long run. With a cool hand and a level head the odds are in your favour, especially when you are playing against men with more money than brains and fonder of whisky than soda.

"My luck, as you have good reason to know, has been phenomenal. It accounts for the pretty dresses you wear; it accounts for the horses you drive; it accounts for all this luxurious furniture; it accounts for my balance at the bank. It has enabled me to keep you going in the best society, in the fashionable circles which surrounded you when you were born—destined to marry an earl at least if it had not been for the penniless adventurer who made such capital out of his good looks and charming manners——"

"Good looks and charming manners indeed," I said, thumping him on the shoulder. "Well, go on."

"That's all," he said.

"Well, and what is there to prevent you leaving off now without tempting providence any further?"

"Good gracious, child," he said quite angrily, "don't you see? The men in the club expect at least a chance of getting some of their money back. They——"

"I don't see the good of winning at all if you feel bound to go on playing till you lose."

"I don't intend to lose," he said quietly. "Winning back lost money is the most expensive game a gambler plays. It makes him demoralised and reckless. Besides, people grow suspicious of a man who gives up play before play gives him up. Society would have nothing to do with us were the ghost of a suspicion cast on my honesty by some blackguard at the club. The loss of society's smile would be nothing to me, but to you——"

Nothing to him, indeed!

"Horace——"

A neat parlour maid opened the door and brought in a note on a silver tray. It is unusual for notes to arrive at three o'clock in the morning, but Horace did not seem in the least surprised.

He took it, read it through quickly, then tore it into fragments and put it carefully, very carefully, in the fire.

He watched the flames leap upon them, he watched the blackened scraps of paper curl and break into a thousand pieces.

"Thank heaven," he said. Then he drew a deep breath of relief.

"I shall have to go out for half an hour," he remarked, getting up and holding out his coat for me to put on. He turned as he reached the door and kissed his hand. "Perhaps I shall manage to take your advice after all," he said with a smile, "only you must give me time."

I sprang to my feet, but he was gone. Then my pent up feelings, like all other pent up things, found an outlet, and I cried a little to myself, wondering at the secret trouble which was gnawing at my husband's heart. That look on his face haunted me all night and for many a long day after.

* * * * *

Lord Bury told me afterwards the end of the story, although he never guessed the truth. About a week must have passed since that nocturnal conversation with my husband, and Bury was standing at the window of the Leman Club talking with my brother Lacy. "Well, if you don't know who the fellow is I'm sure nobody else does," he said. Lacy had a reputation for knowing everybody in London. "I can't imagine how he ever came to be elected, or, rather, why we never blackballed him. There was a time when we were select at this club, at all events."

"He plays a confoundedly good game of cards," said my brother. He had an intense admiration for anyone who could make money.

"So much the worse," said Lord Bury, turning his pockets inside out with a comic gesture of despair. "He cleaned me out last night. One does not mind losing one's money to a fellow like Horace Linley, that lucky brother-in-law of yours, but when it comes to a cad like this man Balsam, or whatever the fellow's name is, it—well, you know what I mean. He's so confoundedly confident about his luck too. Swaggers about it all the time. By Jove, I would give anything to see him

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beaten—not that I have much left that is worth having, even at a gift."

"Horace is the only man who could give him points."

"And Linley won't play with the brute, small blame to him either——"

"Linley is going to play with him to-night."

Both the men turned, and found Sir Alfred Wastemen at their elbow.

"Don't you believe it," said Lacy, helping himself to a cigar from the newcomer's case, much to his disgust.

"It's a fact. One hundred games of ecarté at £100 a piece."

Lord Bury whistled.

"Horace refused to have anything to do with him last night; whereupon Balsam remarked—'And just as well too, if he wants to keep his reputation as the best player in the club,' which brought old Linley up to the scratch like the thoroughbred that he is."

"You don't mean to tell me the fellow had the cheek to say that." Lacy was tremendously shocked. He could not understand anyone being rude, even.

"He did though. Dinner at the Metropole, and then back here to see them play. What?" And the three young men, casting a look of unutterable disgust in the direction of the great leather chair in which the new member of the club sat reading his evening paper, went out into the roar of Piccadilly.

. . . . . .

The card-room of the Leman Club was crowded as it had never been crowded before that night. The news of the great contest had spread abroad, and more than one M.P. had deliberately denied himself the pleasure of hearing one of Chamberlain's speeches in the House to be there to see the sport.

Lacy and a group of his intimate friends stood just behind my husband's chair and Lord Bury was on the opposite side of the table.

The first game was won by Balsam, the second by Horace.

Balsam looked up as the last card was played. "What do you say to doubling the stakes at the end of each game?" he remarked. "I would rather treble them," said Horace. Lacy patted him on the back, but Bury, who was standing in front of him, noticed his lips tremble as they began the third deal. After that, hand after hand was played and my husband invariably lost.

Balsam's success came to him in spite of the fact that he was obviously playing haphazard and against all the canons of the game.

Horace was evidently puzzled. The more irrational his opponent's play the surer he seemed of winning his tricks.

It was at the end of the third game that something occurred which made Lord Bury raise his eyebrows. He looked across to Lacy. Sir Alfred, who was an exceedingly nervous man, turned white to the lips, and suddenly left the room. Balsam had been detected cheating.

The tenth game was in progress when Horace pushed back his chair. "These cards are marked," he said, quietly, "they must have been smuggled into the club with the connivance of one of the under servants—"

"It's a lie," Balsam hissed. He looked round the room hoping to find some support among the members and finding none he made a sudden movement towards the door.

In a moment Bury sprang at him and seized his wrists. "Not so fast, my friend," he said.

Lacy sent a waiter for a policeman, but my husband called the man back.

"Don't make an ass of yourself," he said; "whatever happens, let us avoid a scandal."

Then he turned to his opponent. "There's the door," he said, pointing with his hand. "Go." The other put his hand in his pocket and laid his winnings on the table, feeling like a whipped dog.

Horace took up a little packet of notes and handed it to him without a word. A murmur of approbation at his generosity ran round the room,

When the door was closed upon Balsam, and those who had witnessed the disgraceful episode had returned to the card-room, my husband begged to be allowed to say a word publicly.

"Gentlemen," he said, "I am going to act on impulse. From this moment, and in your presence, I swear solemnly never to touch a card again for the remainder of my life. Whether I am a fool for my pains or not will probably be a matter of dispute, but my mind is made up. I have never before seen cheating at cards, and never again will I, willingly, submit to such an experience. I am impelled to the course I am about to take, and I take it confident that I shall at least have your sympathy."

There were murmurs of applause, which were drowned in louder murmurs of surprise, and several men said openly that they considered Horace an idiot. However, it was admitted on all sides that my husband had conducted himself admirably.

. . . . . .

I never knew until the day of my husband's death the truth of the matter. As he lay dying, mourned by all fashionable London, and, above all, by the members of the Leman Club, he called me to him and told me the secret of his life. Ah, how shall I tell the rest?

My Horace, the husband whom I loved, who was more to me than all the world, was the most successful card-sharper of this or any other age. Balsam was his accomplice, and he used him most ingeniously to cover his retreat from the card tables, after he had become a millionaire. Not a soul ever suspected him or guessed the secret of his mysterious opponent.

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THE MAN MY SISTER MARRIED.

SUMMARY—Chapters I. to V.

The story is told by Violet (Letty) Lombard, who, at the opening, is living at Galveston, U.S.A. with her grandfather, Enos Lombard, Liz the coloured servant, Justina her old nurse, and her Aunt Marg, who has been the recipient of mysterious letters, post-marked New Orleans, necessitating a fortnight's absence from home. John Scott, who married Katherine, Violet's step-sister, a very beautiful girl, pays for Violet's board and lodging, and has just decided that she is to go to a convent in New Orleans. On the strength of information gained from the torn pieces of one of Aunt Marg's letters, and curious to solve their mystery, Violet so arranges that she goes to New Orleans a day earlier, and that she stops at the Hotel Gilbert. Through a crack in the wall, she sees what happens in the next room to hers. John Scott, Captain Dana—an old friend from Galveston—Aunt Marg, and others are sitting in judgment upon a Mexican, Antonio, who has, it transpires, assisted in the seizure of Scott's wife, and of Dana's wife and daughter, and whose terrible crime has been brought to light by Yara, a spy. Antonio is compelled to end his life by taking poison, with his dying words laying the blame upon one Xarras.

Letty goes to the convent in the morning, and during her schooldays there secretly meets James Gregory, who is introduced as the son of a friend of her grandfather's. On her way home again, some months later, with her chaperone Miss Wilson, Colonel Dean Gregory, James' brother, introduces himself.

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CHAPTER VI.

When I look back on what I have written, I am tempted to write no more; for, though my picture of myself is a true one, it is hardly flattering. I do not care for goody-goody books, nor love in a cottage, nor dish-washing, nor acquaintance with food before it comes on the table, and most girls I know are like me. Besides, a girl of eighteen is rather a goose in this generation, not like our sober, decorous grandmothers, who married early, and began rearing families and growing old.

I wanted to be rich, and after the pleasure of companionship at school, the monotony of my cottage home was unbearable. Aunt Marg was so grave and silent; grandfather was always too tired to talk, and Liz was always fault-finding and disagreeable. Only one relief I had from everlasting sameness. I secured the position of a singer in the choir at church. I had long since ceased to worry myself about repaying John Scott.

"Someone should enjoy that money," I said, in a communistic way; "then he was Katherine's husband, almost a relation."

I hunted up *beauté du diable*, and, as near as I could make out, thought it flattered me. I looked at myself in the glass. A clear olive-skin, dark violet eyes, long-lashed and shaded by those odd shadows, a small nose and chin, one dimple in left cheek, and curly bronze hair that I wore in a little knot at the top of my head.

Jim says that I look like a thoroughbred. My feet and hands are small and well-shaped, and I carry myself well, when I am nicely dressed, as any woman does that is not a dowdy. We walked with books on our heads at the convent to make us straight.

No one from the mansion came near me for two weeks. Jim had not come home, and I fancied Mr. Scott did not care to see me any more than I did him; but the second Sunday when I sang in the choir, I saw Colonel Dean Gregory. When the minister preaches, I always look round—did you ever see a choir-singer pay any attention to the sermon?—and I study the new gowns and the people in them.

The colonel was in the pew with his mother and Mrs. Scott. Those two sisters always wear rustling silks and creepy crape; they make an everlasting funeral out of living. I looked very pretty, in a cream coloured muslin, a bunch of violets in my bosom for a bit of colour, and he was staring at me so steadfastly that I turned my head away with a look of cold admonition.

When I came out of church, he was waiting at the door, having put his relatives in their carriage; they keeping up the illusion of first mourners by sitting shrouded and silent.

"You are more charming than I dreamed," said the colonel "What a voice, and not one moment did your pretty face look the same. Even that scornful glance was irresistible."

"You must not talk to me," I said coolly; but, as the gossips were watching, I felt defiant.

"Why not?"

"I have promised not to speak to you," I said, and fled, but I wickedly dropped half my violets at his feet. I had been fingering my bouquet on purpose. He laughed, lifted his hat, and, when he passed me a moment later, he had some of my violets in his buttonhole. Now, why I did that I do not know; I must lay it to my grandmother.

Happier days followed, for Jim came home; and such a dandy he was, too; but grandfather called him a graceless drunkard.

"A young man must sow his wild oats," I said one evening, as grandfather and I sat in the porch. Jim had just gone by on horseback, and had driven grandfather to fury by taking off his hat to me.

"And a young woman, too, eh?" he grunted, taking his pipe out of his mouth, and fixing his beady blue eyes on me.

"No, women must be hypocrites, whited sepulchres."

"You won't make much of a success with that kind of a tomb, then," grinned grandfather. "But Katherine—now she was smart, and was—well, I won't say any more, but the only fair and square woman I ever saw is Margaret Collier."

"Your experience with our sex has been so unfortunate," I said.

"H'm"—and he gave me a deep look—"h'm, well, miss, there are not many men that have to be punished in a third generation by a living conscience walking about and being impudent. Women weren't ever finished in the making, they have no faculty of being trusted."

"You must trust Liz, for you send her with me to rehearsals."

"Old women are different. They can't be wicked if they would."

"If I wasn't watched like a cat I should be happier," I

Give you rope, Vi'let, and you'd hang yourself.

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cried angrily. "I don't like these ways of spying. Girls should go out alone, and John Scott's slavedriver notions are obsolete."

"Give you rope, Vi'let, and you'd hang yourself," grunted grandfather, going down the steps to his rose bushes, his pets. He looked slowly at me, "I ain't so certain in my mind that you won't, anyway."

However, the monotony of this evening, with Aunt Marg in the porch, sitting looking out to sea and never saying a word, was broken by Bruce, Mrs. Scott's servant, bringing me a note; an invitation to dinner at the mansion on the following day. The carriage would call at half-past six. I accepted with pleasure and ran to my room in a whirl of delight. I opened my window wide and looked out. All of a sudden Galveston seemed the most delightful place on earth.

How plain he is in a bathing suit.

Perhaps all do not know that Galveston is an island, and I have heard that sometimes great storms cut it off from the world for days. Never a moment of life here, but the sound of the sea thrills you, gives strange fancies of far-away Pacific islands and coral reefs, an enchanted land beyond the blue horizon where the white sails go.

The city is so old, too, and so staid, with its fine old mansions, the oleander trees, the gnarled salt-cedar by the beach, and rare foreign shrubs brought home by old sea captains. The streets are paved with wooden blocks, and the horses' feet chime out a xylophonic melody with the sea. Our season is spring the year round, save now and then, when a norther comes with its frozen breath and chills us all. I call it a great moral wave.

And the flowers here, the violets and hyacinths, the magnolia and the jasmine, those passionate flowers with their white souls and fragrant breath, and roses red, roses of every kind and colour: white for a bride, pink for fair girls, Jacqueminot and Marechal Niel for the brunette daughters of the South.

And then the sea, the shining blue sea! How it rolls and plays upon the sand, and seethes and splashes, rises dark and thunderous, or coos so softly on a summer's day! And the beach! so many miles of hard smooth sand, where one may ride a horse to death and never realise the flight of time or distance.

Among all those old mansions, I like none so well as that big three-storied dark brick one, John Scott's home. It is so old, the trees have grown high above the wall that shuts it in from the vulgar gaze; vines have festooned the stone posts and peep over the rim of the wall, like little captive princesses eager to see the world.

But the garden, that I love most. It has so many pleasant paths; such wondrous flowers; such mases of roses along the shady walks; and so musical a fountain. It is replete with a dreamy delight where every sense is satisfied and all the noise outside sinks into the murmur of the sea; for the nineteenth century is far away from that enchanted land.

My home is down on the beach, near the sea, a tiny cottage set upon upright logs of wood, so that the waves may wash under. When people warn my grandfather for being so near the treacherous sea, he tells them he has been there for over thirty years, and in the great storm of years ago his home withstood the shock of wind and wave.

All along the beach are shanty bathing-houses, and I have one so far from the house that even Liz's sharp eyes cannot tell me from the other nondescript creatures disporting in the tide. I have a pretty bathing suit of blue and white, and I can swim well. In that sea, by the buoy, I have met Jim every day since he came home, when the weather permitted a plunge. Tuesday, the morning of my invitation, there he was waiting for me, blue and shivering.

I swam out to him. I like to go away beyond the buoy, for I hope a shark will get me or the undertow carry me out, and I picture quite tranquilly grandfather's remorse at calling me a living conscience, and Aunt Marg's misery because she never understood me before; though why my death would make my character any easier to comprehend I never thought out.

"Coming to-night?" called Jim, his teeth chattering. How plain he is in a bathing suit, and so cold and blue! "Been wait-ing a half-h-ou-r, it isn't fair to keep me here s-o l-o-o-ng."

"Couldn't help it. Aunt Marg was hanging about. You'd better go in. You'll get cramp and drown."

A big wave comes, and I lift myself away up on its crest and dive into the green wall of water. I love the sea; it is never rough with me. I could hug those waves or lie cradled in them as in a mother's arms. If I must come back to earth as a lower form of animal life, I want to be a fish—a slimy shark, so I cannot be eaten. Jim comes wobbling after me.

"Did-did you get-t-t the no-te? Got-Dean to send it. Ma said you wouldn't behave - told her you-you had re-formed."

"I won't go," I said indignantly.

"Please, Letty," he chatters, and looked so funny that I laugh. I know well enough I would not miss that dinner for the world. Then finding he cannot stand the cold he swims to shore.

That night I looked my best in a a simple white wool gown with violets, and a meek look. I meant to show Mrs. Doctor Nathan Scott what a lady I was. Really, though, she had reason to dislike me. Jim and I once cut white eyes in one of her paintings, and made the people look like ghouls, and we put the skeleton we found in the garret in the best spare-room, where she found it when she went to see if the room was aired for the bishop, who was coming on a visit. I always wished he had been the one to find it.

"Do I look pretty, grandpa?" I asked, tripping down to show my finery.

"She does," cried Aunt Marg, who seldom praised me. "so innocent and good."

"All you know of women, Marg," growled that old cynic. "She is in her worst mood for mischief."

"All you know of women, Marg," growled that old cynic.

I can tell by Bruce's look, when he opens the carriage door, that I am very fine.

"Yo' changed a heap, Miss Vi'let," he says politely. He called me a "trifflin' brat" two years before.

I bowed haughtily, and swept up the steps. My gown is lined with silk throughout, for I cut up my second best silk to do it. I have taught myself to believe that John Scott ought to be grateful to be allowed to spend his money on such a perfect creature as Letty Lombard.

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A maid took my hat and gloves, and ushered me into a stately room, with rare old paintings; bric-a-brac, gathered from the whole wide word; ebony furniture, upholstered in faded yellow satin; and a carpet as thick as they are ever made, a yellow ground with red roses: I used to think it grand. The room was dimly lit with wax candles. Mrs. Scott pretends she likes soft light best, but I know she wants to hide the ravages of time in her countenance.

She came in at that moment to meet me, a tiny woman, with microscopic hands, and rustling silk. She makes one think of crape. After her came Mrs. Gregory, angular and frigid. A tall, bony woman, with cold black eyes, and Pompadour hair. She always has jet trimming on her silk gown, and sheds beads everywhere. She could be tracked, as lost children are in fairy tales, when they take pebbles along to keep the path. She gave me a chilly hand, and a few beads rolled down my gown off her sleeve.

Mrs. Scott then, as if she had been fighting against her better nature, and the better nature conquered, came and kissed me. Her cheek, with its odour of powder, is like a crumpled rose-leaf; both old ladies are pretty liberal with cosmetics. Grandfather says Mrs. Gregory has not given up the hope of a second husband.

We engaged in a dreary and discreet conversation, wherein I found myself Johnsonian. My acquirements at the convent rolled easily off my tongue, awing poor Mrs. Scott, who likes simple novels in three volumes. Mrs. Gregory, to subdue me, dashed into the Greek philosophers. I remembered Dean Gregory's conversation with Miss Wilson, and proved a match for her, airing her teacher's pet theories as if I had acquired them myself.

"Your complexion is so perfect, Violet," interrupted poor Mrs. Scott, who does not like the Greeks, "and you are so careless of it."

"Perhaps," I said carelessly; "but it may be because I don't use powder; I think it ill-bred."

I flung that shot at them both, and it made them wince.

"But it is so necessary in this climate," sighed Mrs. Scott; and I thought of the bit of powder-laden chamois skin in my pocket and nearly laughed out loud.

"Do you think," ventured Mrs. Scott, "that she is like Katherine?"

"Not the slightest resemblance," answered Mrs. Gregory icily, and rose to meet other guests. I am so used to those remarks I heed them no more.

"What a witch you are," said Dean Gregory. He came quietly up to me, looking very handsome in his evening dress. "I listened to your talk." He sat down by me on the sofa, and I chatted away with him, forgetting my promise; but I grew tired of him. I hated the way he stared and some queer physical repulsion grew in me toward him. When Jim came I jumped up with a little cry of delight.

"I am 'nowhar' as they say here, beside my Adonis of a younger brother," laughed the colonel goodnaturedly.

"Are you in love with him?" Jim asked, watching his brother's retreating figure; "they all are."

"I don't believe I even like him," I said, and we stayed in our corner until dinner, where we had a place together behind some flower ornaments, and enjoyed ourselves. I watched the other guests eat, and made no mistakes. Jim drank a great deal of champagne, and I kept thinking of what grandfather said about him. Not very kind to my entertainer. After dinner we slipped softly out of the French window to the garden. The only one that saw us was Dean Gregory, and he looked at me with a hateful meaning smile that felt like a slap in my face.

CHAPTER VII.

Oh, that garden in the summer night, under the stars! Far off sounded the sea, hushed and slumbrous, and the music, dulled by distance, chimed sadly and softly through the trees.

"Don't speak to wake me, Jim," I said, and dropped his arm. I wandered on alone. I owned that lovely place; I was a captive princess in a far, tropic land. Over me a date palm thrust its graceful branches to the stars; beside me a banana shrub, here and there queer snaky palms, or great, quivering palm-fans; by the fountain, the marble Diana looking steadfastly for the moon, gleaming white like a sister spirit.

"Oh, Jim!" I cried, "if all this were mine! That lovely home and this."

"And a fine crib it would be," he growled, sitting on a bench lighting a cigar.

I left him in disgust. A pale little moon peeped over the tree-tops as I wandered on, and the music ceased. So wrapped in dreams I grew that suddenly I turned, afraid of my own thoughts, and ran hurriedly back to the bench guided by the red light from Jim's cigar. I sat down near him and he put my light wrap over me.

"Does smoking annoy you?" he said.

"How long ago was it, Jim, that you and I were rolling cigarettes at Justina's?"

"Don't. You are different now, Letty." A saucy answer came to my lips, but something checked me; then my mood changed.

"This is a night for dreams," I said softly, "not to talk of silly sins. Oh, that I were the lady of the manor!"

"Why should you not be?" he said hoarsely. "Listen. Years ago Doctor Scott got angry with Dean and left him out of his will, but directed that John should help him if he needed it, and do for other children if there were any. John has always been good to me, and now he has no heir but me, as Dean is rich. Scott will never marry again, so you see, Letty, this place will be mine some day. Scott's liable to be killed by a Mexican at any time—Dean said so. They hate him like poison in Mexico; there's a gang there, sworn to kill him."

"You must not talk so," I faltered.

"A cad like that can't enjoy money as we could," snarled Jim, throwing away his half-smoked cigar.

"We?" I echoed blindly.

"We! for I love you, Letty." He threw out his arm and drew me to him, and I, who slapped him once for trying to kiss me, said never a word. "It's queer, too," he went on, "for I have known you so long and know just what a spitfire you are; but I am going to marry you."

I think he meant it then, for his face was fond and loving, his voice tremulous, his eyes shining with admiration for me.

"You are so pretty; there's not a girl in Galveston anywhere near you."

I did not care for him, save as my one friend and fellow evil-doer. We sympathised with each other and got into the same scrapes all our young days, and now he was the only brightness in my dull life. He slipped a ring on my finger.

"You never asked if I—I liked you," I said crossly; "you seem pretty sure of me."

"Why not?" he laughed and kissed me, and I did not struggle. I looked at him keenly. He seemed very pale and good-looking in the moonlight, and because he was no longer plain to me I took it for granted I must care for him as girls do for lovers. "I think I do care for you," I said aloud; but added mentally, "because you don't appear so plain."

I rose, and went to the back of the bench, then I leaned over and laid my cheek against his. "Let me kiss you once, Jim," I said. "I never kissed a young man in my life." Then I ran to the house, the frou-frou of my gown following me like a ghost. By the hall mirror I saw I was looking radiantly pretty, Colonel Dean came to meet me.

"No one saw you go out," he said, glancing at my new ring that seemed to gather all the light in the hall in its diamond eye. "Jim must have been very entertaining." I ran past him and made my adieux. At the door of the cottage, after the carriage had gone, I saw Jim come out of the shadow.

"I had to see you once more, Letty," he said hoarsely; "only tell me you love me, and kiss me again. I would lay down my life for you." I pushed away his hand and ran into the house. Up in my own room I looked at my flushed face.

"The truth is, Letty Lombard," I muttered, "you don't like men at all, any of them; but can you live here all your days? Why not be a schemer and marry Jim and be rich some time. Here is your chance."

From that day I began a course of silly deceit that fills me now with shame. Jim being forbidden the house, I used to

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meet him outside; and there were notes, by queer and impudent messengers, and places and times of being with him that made the neighbours talk. Grandfather heard now and then of my having been with Jim, and how angry he was! and Aunt Marg was grieved and silent; Liz cross and rude. Truly I grew to hate them all. Once, in desperation, I asked grandfather why I should not marry Jim, and in a very fury he turned on me.

"You are a curse to an honest house," he cried; "ungrateful, selfish, heartless; but even then you shall not marry a Gregory while I am on this earth; I swear it. If you won't be ruled by your Aunt Marg's misery and my pleading, I'll watch you till the end of my life."

He and Liz never left me alone after that, and even my door was locked at night. Oh, had they told me then, or reasoned with me with kindness, I would not have gone on. Force made me defiant, unkindness drove me to frenzy, and so, one October night, I put on a dark gown, and with my black cloak and hood about me, sat by my window to wait. I had promised Jim to run away with him. It seemed as though Aunt Marg and grandfather would never go to bed, and even when she came upstairs she had to try my door and ask if I were asleep, but I would not answer.

Solemnly the old clock in the hall tolled midnight. Twelve sonorous strokes, echoing through the quiet house. I swung myself to the ground by the grape-vine over the back porch. It was a dim moonlit night, cloudy and threatening a storm; the sea was so high I had to creep close to the street above the sand. I drew my hood over my face when I heard voices, and slunk into the shadow of Justina's cottage, whither I was going.

"This is the house," said a voice, hollow and odd in the fog, and I dimly saw two spectral forms so near me I could have touched them. I fairly dug my nails into the wood of the house for fear they would see me. "She is to be here at twelve o'clock—an hour yet." Then I remembered, with a great sob in my throat, that our hall clock was out of order, and did not tell the time correctly. What had fate saved me from? "She is to run away with Jim, but he must not marry her. I have won him over."

"I can't see what you gain, Dean," said a strange voice.

"This is the house," said a voice, hollow and odd in the fog.

"Dr. Scott meant that I should have some of his property; but that canting sneak, John, beat me out of it. I know he told about that mulatto girl. You know the story. Well, John has a will now, leaving all his property to this girl, Katherine's sister. He doesn't like Jim, I can see that. If I can ruin the girl's chances, I am the only heir. He seems very friendly to me now, and if once the girl is out of the way I have a good show."

"He may marry."

"Never, his infatuation for the sainted Katherine stands in the way. That's why he leaves this sister his money. Egad, the girl out of the way, John may not live so long himself, only Mexican cowardice stands in the way and his vile luck."

"His cunning, you mean. He has the eye of a hawk and the wisdom of a serpent, and that steel hand besides. Not an easy man to kill, Dean. Egad! though if you are broke, there is a big stake to play for."

"You play the preacher to-night, for the girl may not fall into the trap unless she thinks it is all right. She's an odd one, half-bad, half-good, not handsome like Kate."

"A good thing there was only one Katherine," said the other, "for the morals of the community."

"She's smart, the little one though. Jim's wild over her, and I only won him by saying I'd tell Scott the whole story, and he knew John would never let him marry her against the old grandfather's consent."

They walked on, still talking. In a curious daze, I staggered past the cottage, out on the beach, and then I ran as fast as my feet could carry me straight away from the town. I heard nothing but the crashing of the sea. I saw only the grey fog closing in, and almost on the brink of a deep tide inlet I staggered and would have fallen in, but strong arms caught me and brought me to my feet.

"It's Letty," said a kindly voice, and there stood old Captain Dana holding me tight in work-hardened hands. "Aye, it is you, and I've watched for ye so long. Oh, Letty, it's a path straight to perdition."

The captain had aged terribly since that night at the Hotel Gilbert; grown bowed and shrunken, the light gone from his eyes, his whole bearing saddened and despairing. What were *his* dreams, if mine, an innocent looker-on, were haunted by that tortured Mexican, his defiant voice, his frightful death, and the poisoned wine dripping on to the floor?

"I was going to run away with Jim," I cried. I would never deceive again.

"Yet you seemed running away *from* Jim," he said dryly, "and I prayed ye would, an' I was sent here in time." I scarcely heard him, but went on and told what those two men had said. "We were to be married at Justina's by a minister," I sobbed.

"That Mexican cat," he muttered.

"It was me, Captain; she would shed her blood for me, she loves me so. Don't blame her."

"No minister would marry ye at twelve o'clock at night, at such a place, Letty," he went on kindly; "being so young and wild-like, you never thought of that. There's no good in the Gregory family, in the whole line. Their ancestors fought against the United States soldiers at the Alamo, and they were Americans too. There is a vein of treachery in the race; they can't be fair. Think of you, tied for life to a drunkard and a gambler, and willing to hurt you by a runaway like this. Oh, Letty, those meanderings of yours have borne fruit."

"What do you mean?" I asked, vaguely.

"Jest meanderings. Many's the night you've passed me out here when you've stole away from your innocent girl's bed to walk with him. And I've followed you close; for I says, 'Dana, you'd a daughter once, thank God now in happy death; think of her in this poor innocent child's place.' I knowed the Lombard spirit in you. I never told tales; I jest watched. If Enos had tried ye too fur, you'd growed desprit and flung yourself away. I daren't take the risk. I just waited for your sense to come.

"It's tired me to follow you, for you was strong and I'm old and lame; but I kept myself up, thinking of my dead Clarice. If I, with all the burden of my years and trouble, could save you, some of that I've been forced to do might be overlooked in the last account. Then I growed to care for ye. You was so innercent and childlike. Home may be trying, Letty, but it's safety and shelter, and you are kept pure and good there."

The night had grown brighter, for the clouds had blown seaward, and the moon, unobscured, threw a dazzling radiance on the dark rolling sea. Never did I feel such gratitude to a living creature as to that old man at my side. Far ahead I saw a spectral, shadowy figure.

"There is Jim," I cried, and my heart beat so fast I could not walk, but stood there in an agony of fear and shame, while he, seeing me, came rapidly toward us.

(To be continued next week.)

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CUPID'S SERVITOR.

LIKE a batch of bread made with stale yeast—sodden and sour—was the face of Clymer Ames. He was the very last man you would have supposed to be the salaried servitor of Cupid. Yet, so fond of paradoxes is fate, that this man, who had eschewed Love, made his bread and butter by serving him. But, like all who wait on Love with interested motives, he received nothing but dross for his pains.

Yet every day from eight in the morning till five in the afternoon this man, who could have killed Eros for his perfidious conduct, was obliged to toil in his behalf. He was, in short, the clerk who issued the marriage licences.

When he first went into the service of the greatest of cosmopolitans, Cupid, he dedicated to him a very bad chirography, a totally uneducated perception, and an indefatigable industry.

In the course of a few weeks spent behind the little window in the county court's spacious apartments, the chirography of this young man began to improve. So did his perception.

He could tell when a man approached him whether he had family pride or not; whether or not he was sentimental and impatient; whether he was inclined for hymeneal display; whether he was happy or fearful; whether he was going to marry a woman of whom he was proud, or only one with whom he was in love.

Clymer Ames, who at first only saw the stage carpentering and scene-shifting in this drama of the emotions, began to wonder how it would look from the front.

He found himself getting very curious as to what a man did and said before—armed with the age, name, maternal and paternal parents' names of his bride—he came to ask for legal permission to be for ever happy.

It would be very easy, of course, for Clymer Ames to get that legal right. In his capacity of lover he could approach himself in his capacity as clerk, and without unnecessary embarrassment or hesitation ask for a licence, and get it.

To be sure, he could not well be on both sides of the window at once, and he had some doubt about the complete regularity of a licence granted under circumstances in which the applicant associated with such unseemly familiarity with his superior, the clerk.

This, however, was a difficulty which he felt could be overcome. But that was the fifth act. What led up to it? What did a lover do through the four preceding acts?

Clymer Ames determined to find out.

Lydia Eastwater lived in the next street to the one in which Clymer Ames boarded, and she came down to see the daughter of the landlady and play tennis with her on the lawn. Clymer, who had hitherto detested tennis, felt convinced as soon as he saw Lydia Eastwater that exercise was the only thing for him after office hours.

"It must be dull staying in the house all day this hot weather," said Lydia Eastwater one night when they stood together on the same side of the tennis net.

"It's dull enough. But nothing to what it used to be, you know. I have something to look forward to now."

"Have you?" said Lydia Eastwater innocently.

"It's the tennis in the evenings I look forward to. It brightens up my whole day. Don't you care for it, too?"

"Me?" ejaculated Lydia, with ungrammatical nonchalance. "Oh, yes, I like tennis well enough. I wish, though, that these people would come back and go on playing."

She flirted out one foot as she talked, and revealed a marvellous stocking. Clymer wondered if the twenty-two fellows who had that day applied to him for the sanction of the law to their bliss had experienced such difficulties in the first act—he felt himself to be nearing the end of that part of the drama.

If Lydia Eastwater would only show some sign, however slight, that her heart throbbed as his did he would be willing to have the curtain drawn down for the *entr'acte* and let the orchestra play a while.

"It is not because I play tennis that I am happy," he cried explosively, "but because I play tennis with you."

"Oh," cried Miss Eastwater, as she re-tied the yellow bow on her hat; "isn't it too bad, then, that I am going away to-morrow for the rest of the summer!"

Going for the rest of the summer! Clymer was sure none of those twenty-two men, with licences in their pockets, had ever known such suffering as this. He leaned against a tree. He could not remember feeling so strange since that day he fainted in the office, after being up all night with the poor clerk who had the rheumatic fever.

"Then you are not sorry to go?" he whispered. "You will not miss me?"

Lydia Eastwater tied the yellow bow once more. It was growing into a deeper twilight. The one bar of red in the west was all that was left of the day. She hit at a moth that fluttered by in the dusk.

"Why, yes, I shall care. I shall care very much indeed." She looked straight at him, and the red in the west got into her cheeks. Clymer leaned forward, throbbing with a new life. He forgot all about the first act, and even about the fifth one. All he saw was a girl's eyes; all he felt was her soft lips.

Then the other players came walking across the lawn in the twilight, and the next day Miss Eastwater went away.

Clymer wrote to her, of course. He stole the time in which to do this from the service of his county. But the answers were not just what he had expected they would be.

They were full of pleasant gossiping and even of the expressions of those girlish opinions which most young maidens hold, and which so strongly resemble copybook mottoes. But she said very little of just the sort of thing that Clymer desired her to say. He consoled himself by looking at every applicant for a licence who thrust his face in at the little window, and reflecting:

"Ah, my man, you look happy now. But I know what you have been through. You may not believe it, but I myself have experienced the rapture of the first act, and am now in the midst of the perplexities which are so necessary to the progress of the play. My dear fellow, take this form, with my blessing. It looks very commonplace, perhaps, to the uninitiated; but you and I are perfectly aware that it is the passport to heaven."

None of these remarks were audible, of course. They were combined soliloquies of Clymer the lover and Clymer the clerk.

One day a stranger entered the office, a fine young fellow with a handsome face and a swinging walk.

"Man of importance, of property, of temper, and enthusiasm," said the clerk to himself, after his usual manner of summing up customers.

"I want a marriage licence," said the young man gaily and peremptorily.

"Name?" said the clerk, trying to be perfunctory, but actually throbbing with sympathy with this happy young animal.

"Alfred Sydney Johnson Clayton."

"Name of lady?"

"Lydia Ernestine Westwater."

The clerk went on filling out the rest of the form, and did not move a muscle. The lover—but there was no lover except the young man who went out, swinging his shoulders as he went.

And so the face of Cupid's servitor became, as was mentioned at first, like a batch of bread made from stale yeast. And though he works for Love, he and his clerk do not speak when they meet, and the capricious boy has ever been seen to fold his wings closer about him with an air of contempt when he looks at Clymer Ames, clerk of the court, and the issues of marriage licences.

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A FIRST-CLASS COMBINATION

INDUSTRY and intelligence make a first-class combination. But it is rare. A lazy fellow who is inventive and intelligent often accomplishes more than an industrial fool. In the infancy of the steam engine a boy was set to let the steam into the ends of the cylinder alternately, by hand. He found it a boresome task, and so invented a way to make the engine wait on itself. His method has been in use ever since - the principle of the "eccentric" motion. "What do you mix your paints with to produce those wonderful colours?" asked somebody of Sir Joshua Reynolds. "With brains," curtly answered the great artist.

This is a big idea, and it has to do with everything under the sun. Here, for instance, is the case of a man who spent a whole summer in bed when he might just as well have been on his feet looking after his business and having odds and ends of pleasure on evenings and holidays.

Along in the spring of 1889 he took a chill; exactly the time of year to take chills if you don't watch out, and often if you do. Well, immediately afterwards a dreadful pain struck into both his hips and legs. The result of this was that he had to go to bed, and he stayed there sixteen weeks. Just think of that! Fancy it a problem in arithmetic—a child's simple "sum" to be worked out on a slate. Add the pain, the trouble and worry to his family, the direct extra expenses, the loss of time and income, the loss of the summer's enjoyments, the doctor's bills, etc., etc.—and see what it tots up at.

The first doctor who attended him said he had sciatica, and had it very bad. The doctor was either right or wrong. If he was right the result showed that he didn't know how to cure sciatica. If he was wrong it showed that he couldn't diagnose a disease from its symptoms. Put it how you will, he might have been an industrious, hard-working man, but lacked something of being a proper doctor. Well, he gave up the case, and Mr. Dawson (our suffering friend's name) sent for another. This one blistered him and painted him with iodine from his waist to his feet. By this time Mr. Dawson was unable to get out of bed or to dress himself without assistance.

The doctors' medicines and applications failing to help him he went to the hospital at Buxton, where he was advised to try the baths. After being there three weeks he returned home but little better for the treatment.

The conclusion of this exasperating experience is set forth in a few words by Mr. Dawson himself in a letter from which the abovementioned facts are taken.

"I had," he says, "little or no use of my legs, and it was wholly out of my power to attend to my business. I lost a deal of sleep in consequence of the pain, and owing to a want of appetite and necessary nourishment I grew very weak. Even after leaving my bed, if I went out for a breath of fresh air, I had to stop and rest every few yards. I was so broken and helpless that my wife and others who saw me thought I never should get about again. In this condition I remained until January, 1891, when I read of cases like mine having been cured by Seigel's Syrup. Persuaded by the clearness and evident sincerity of the reasoning, I began taking the Syrup, and soon found relief. My legs had more power, and the pain gradually subsided, until it ceased altogether, and I could go about as I did before I was taken ill. If I had only known of this remedy and used it sooner, I should have been saved suffering *and heavy doctors' bills.* You can publish this statement if you think it will be of use to others. Yours truly (signed), Harrison Dawson, Heap Bridge, Bury, April 27th, 1893."

Our friend's inference is perfectly logical as to the advantage he would have derived from an earlier knowledge of Mother Seigel's Curative Syrup; as his ailment—acute rheumatism—arose from the poison generated by a torpid digestion and a clogged liver, for which the Syrup is a specific. His doctors laboured hard to cure him, no doubt, but without an understanding of the *cause* of his condition. Blind men may walk, but are apt to walk in circles. The remedy that succeeds where others fail is a product of industry *and* intelligence.

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